

# CHEADLE AND GATLEY U3A

Registered Charity Number:1172853



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

## SEPTEMBER 2020 NEWSLETTER

### Message from the Chair

When the Covid-19 lockdown started in March we were hoping that things might return to something close to normal so that we could resume our meetings by September. But this is now not possible.

However, many things ARE possible: groups are starting to meet again, in different ways, and we are working on bringing you interesting alternatives to meeting in person at our Monthly Meetings.

I hope you will enjoy reading all about what's happening at Cheadle and Gatley U3A.



**This Newsletter** is not intended to be like our normal half-yearly Newsletter; it contains just a few topical items, and is really just a means of keeping in touch with our members for the period while we cannot hold our usual Monthly Meetings.

Some of you who are on Facebook may like the feature which displays 'memories' in the form of images that you posted years ago. Lesley certainly enjoys it, and I am often asked "guess what we were doing on this day 2, 4 or 6 years ago?". If we were up a mountain in the Alps I will probably remember it! I am going to adopt that idea and for the Groups who have submitted photos for the previous Newsletters, I have included an interesting image or two generally from the early years of our U3A. This section follows the more topical items of news below.

### Allan Witton

#### Beating the Gloom - Making Way for Zoom

The new situation means that it is impossible to arrange a monthly meeting with all members invited to be physically present in the hall at Elm Road URC.

Any plan for the future must include using digital technology for virtual meetings.

This can afford an excellent opportunity to increase skills and share knowledge to keep connected.

A few speakers are ready to give Zoom talks and I am trying to confirm an invitation for the middle of October to time with the afternoon of Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> October.

Best wishes to everyone – stay safe and well.

### Mary Sharples

#### Poetry Group and Reading Group plans

I have spoken to Gina at the URC and the 5 other members of the Poetry group. The consensus amongst members is that they want to carry on but not on Zoom. So we are reconvening, hopefully on Monday 5th October, in The Oak room, which will allow social distancing.

New members will be very welcome, and feel free to come for a 'taster' session if you wish.

I am also hoping to offer a reading group on 6th October at the URC and possibly a Zoom group later for those members still staying indoors.

**Tina Kelly 376 7909 07909126362**

*The following article was written by Peter Briggs, a C&G U3A member and Convenor of the Environment Group.*

## **Garden archaeology in Cheadle Hulme during Covid-19 lockdown: Victorian wildfowling hide discovered**

### **1. Introduction**

The 5-month period of 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020 to 1<sup>st</sup> August 2020 has been unprecedented and traumatic for most people during the global pandemic of Covid-19. On 3<sup>rd</sup> March it was predicted that this new virus might infect 80% of people in the UK and the Government issued strict guidelines based on advice from the country's scientific experts on how to mitigate the impact of the virus on the population, especially for elderly people. On Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020, the UK Government ordered all people of 70 years (and above) to stay in their homes and gardens; the national lockdown had begun.

It was understood that the virus would not spread easily outdoors and so people were encouraged to exercise in parks and other open-spaces. As a keen gardener and environmentalist, I welcomed these guidelines and took every opportunity to enjoy some Spring sunshine and to tackle a host of tasks in my garden in Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire.

### **2. Activity Plan**

As part of some re-planning of a major bed in the garden that required some new shrubs, this was the time to spread a well-matured compost heap from the bottom of the garden. With help from zealous young grand-daughters who wanted to construct a fox-trap, we moved half of the compost and, in so-doing, discovered some interesting stones that appeared to form a man-made structure (75mm to 200mm below the level of the lawn). My archaeological interests were aroused; thanks to sunny dry spells in April and May, our first trench (approx. 1m x 1m in area and 200mm deep) was carefully developed.

### **3. The Site**

My house and garden was built in 1957 as part of a suburban development based on a re-use of the Brook Field land that formed part of Orrishmere Farm. The builders cleared a substantial area that was bounded by the Micker Brook and Demmings Bleach Works (north) and by Cheadle Road (south and west). Many large trees (beech and willow) in the vicinity of the Micker Brook and Old Wool Lane (now bordering Cheadle Golf Course) survived the clearance.

Andrew Bryant's map of Cheshire of 1831 (ref.1) shows the Micker Brook with the agricultural Brook Field (south of the Brook) and Damings Print Works (established in 1789 north of the Brook). The Print Works continued until 1885 and the site was then converted to the Demmings Bleach and Dye Works. There was one bridge across the Micker Brook that connected Demmings Works with Brook Field (including Orrishmere Farm). Ordnance Survey data of 2014 shows the new bridge connecting Queens Road and Demmings Road; it crosses the Micker Brook in the vicinity of Pickmere Gardens. The garden of my house borders Queens Road, Pickmere Gardens and Old Wool Lane; prior to the development of Orrishmere Estate, the land of the garden would be adjacent to Brook Field and be close to the duck pond of Orrishmere Farm.

### **4. The dig**

After removing the top 75mm of soil and grass from the trench-site, the flat stone structure (held together with mortar) appeared to be the corner of a building. As the dig progressed, 2 red bricks connected at their ends with mortar were discovered. These were well-worn on their top surfaces and were only crudely fixed with broken brick wedges at right angles to the main flat-stone structure. The area adjacent to the flat-stone structure on the opposite side to the 2 bricks was composed of random stones that roughly formed a surface at the same level as the main flat-stone structure and the top surface of the 2 bricks. A variety of non-connected building materials were found during the dig and these are listed in Table 1. Their different types and the fact that most were broken supports the context that the garden land formerly had farm buildings on it before it was cleared by the building contractors. However, the singular flat-stone and brick structure indicates that it might have been constructed from recycled materials after the farm land had been cleared.

#### **Table 1: Materials and products found during this dig**

Bricks and paving stones (200 x 90 x 25mm) with 16mm thick white mortar  
Terracotta pottery (40 x 35 x 5mm) and pieces of glazed white + blue ceramic ware  
Colourless glass sheet (thicknesses 1mm, 2mm, 4mm)  
Cementious pipe section (150 x 60 x 6mm) with some coarse wrapping  
Grey cementious roof tile with green decorative top-coating (90 x 50 x 15mm)  
Corroded gunshot cartridge (approx. 50mm long x 20mm diameter)  
Iron nail (60mm), iron screw (30mm) and grey metal, shaped-component (52 x 8 x 4mm)

## 5. What was discovered?

The proximity to the Micker Brook and to the Orrishmere duck-pond on Brook Field suggests a reason for the purpose of the discovered stone-structure. The design of this structure and its location would fit its use for game or wildfowl gun-shooting (especially rabbits, hares, pheasants or ducks). The dimensions of the stone-work would fit its use as a low seat (such as in a hide or amongst long grass/reeds). The 2 side bricks are suitably arranged to act as a shotgun rest and the random stone assembly on the left of the seat could function as a holding surface for the hunter's snacks, drinks and his gunshot cartridges. The discovery of a corroded gunshot cartridge next to this seat supports this theory.



Photograph of wildfowler's shooting seat found in Cheadle Hulme

## 6. History of Gun Sports in Victorian Cheshire

Game-shooting was popular in 18th, 19th and early 20th century Victorian England and Wales. This period was difficult for families in the textile-finishing industry around Cheadle and Stockport; local historians and archaeologists have documented the period 1789 to 1926 (Refs.2, 3). The proximity of a game or wildfowl gun-shooting hide near to the Brook Field and to Demmings Works would be attractive to both sportsmen and to factory workers seeking to provide extra food for their families (Ref. 4). There was a huge upheaval in English farming during the 18th century and this went on in the 19th century. These changes were nearly all in favour of the large farmer.

The Game Act 1831 (Ref.5) was passed in England and Wales to protect game (especially grouse, pheasant, partridge and hares) by establishing open seasons when they could be legally taken; this Act still covers the protection of game birds to the present day.

Hunting with shotguns began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The practice of waterfowl hunting for ducks and geese (often known as wildfowling) was extremely popular in England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; it was both a pastime and a means of earning a living. Waterfowl can be hunted in farm fields where they feed or more frequently on or near to areas of water such as rivers, ponds or lakes.

William Johnston sums up social interactions in his history book (ref.4): *'If the farming men now and then mix with the landowners in their field sports, it is upon a footing of understood inferiority, and the association exists only out of doors, or in the public room of an inn after a cattle-show or an election. The difference in manners of the two classes does not admit of anything like social and family intercourse.'*

The class differences are also evident in Leech's engraving of 1851.





Engraving by John Leech in 1851 showing squire and farmer

## 7. References

1. Andrew Bryant, 'Map of Cheshire of 1831'.
2. Stockport Heritage Map No.9 (1998), 'Cheadle Hulme and District, 1882', ISBN 0 905164 45 8.
3. Cheadle Civic Society and South Manchester Archaeological Research Team, 'An ancient and historic place: The Archaeology of Cheadle', Published by Oxford Archaeology Ltd (2014).
4. William Johnston, 'England as it is: Political, Social and Industrial, in the middle of the Nineteenth Century', (1851).
5. 'The Game Act', (England and Wales), (1831).

**Peter Briggs 5th August 2020**

## Early Cheadle and Gatley U3A Newsletters

Our U3A Group was formed in the summer of 2011, and our first, very modest, Newsletter was produced for the June 2012 meeting. It was a mere 8 pages of A5 size (four pages of A4) consisting entirely of text reporting on Group activities, with no images.

The December 2012 edition was considerably expanded with eight A4 pages, and a small selection of eight black and white images. From this edition to date, all the Newsletters can be found on our website; all but the last two are in the Archive link in the sidebar. The June 2013 version was expanded into 12 pages with 12 images, still black and white.

In December 2013 the arrangement which continues today was established, with a black and white printed edition produced for distribution at our Monthly meetings, and an on-line version with colour images emailed to all members for whom we have an email address. (Printing a colour version is about four times more expensive than black and white, and a current run would cost almost £500.)

**Allan Witton**

## Groups which have regularly featured images in our Newsletters

### Archaeology



Some of the Archaeology Group on a field trip to Hadrian's Wall, Vindolanda and Housesteads, as featured on the cover of the July 2016 Newsletter.

### Monday Book Group

The Monday Book group is one of our original groups. It meets in Lesley Witton's house, and this is an image of the group members from the first illustrated Newsletter in December 2012.



### Tuesday Book Group



The Tuesday Book Group meets in Cheadle library where this image was taken for the July 2016 Newsletter.



## Bowling



This small friendly group started in 2016 and are keenly developing their skills.

This photo is of one of their early meetings and featured in the July 2016 Newsletter.

## Bus Pass and Explorers

The Bus Pass and Explorers Group is a more recently formed and very popular group. Visits are arranged to local places of interest and there are occasional day trips to places further afield.

The image from the January 2020 Newsletter shows the group in the Moot Hall on a visit to Appleby- in- Westmorland.



## Coach Holidays



Coach holidays are a relatively new innovation organised by Brenda Ward, with the first holiday being to Bridlington in October 2018 and subsequent ones to Devon and Swansea.

The image from the cover of the July 2019 Newsletter shows some members cruising on the river Dart.



## Craft/Sewing

This is an original Group whose members work on a variety of crafts, which are often featured in our Newsletters.

This is a display of some of their work from the June 2013 Newsletter.



## Dining



The Dining Group usually meets Wednesday lunchtimes for a light-hearted social get together with food and drink.

The image is from the June 2014 Newsletter and shows diners at the new Brazilian restaurant in Cheadle.

## Environment

This is a fairly recently formed group which offers a mixture of talks and visits with an environmental theme.

The image, from the cover of the July 2018 Newsletter, shows some of the group visiting Sharston Materials Recovery Facility for a talk and a tour.





## Family History

The late Sheila Harkin started this small group in 2011 and members met in her home for several years. The group is now convened by Linda Corry.

The image is from the December 2012 Newsletter.



## Gardening



The Group is one of our original groups, and offers a mixture of talks, practical sessions and visits to members' gardens and such places as Tatton and Dunham Massey. The images are from the June 2014 Newsletter and show the group at Biddulph Grange.

## Local History



The Local History Group is one of our original, most vibrant and popular groups. It offers a mixture of talks and visits to local places of historical interest. The first image (from the June 2015 Newsletter) was taken inside St Thomas' church and the second, inside Stockport Town Hall, is from the December 2014 Newsletter.



### Lunchtime Concerts – for free



The Group has been visiting various venues for lunchtime concerts since the early years.

The photo (from the December 2013 Newsletter) shows the group outside Ordsall Hall before a concert there.

### MOOCs – The Online Learning Group



Members of the MOOCs Group (also known as the tea and cake group!) have studied a huge variety of online courses, and exchange ideas at the monthly meetings, over ..... tea and cakes!.

### Painting and Drawing



This is one of our more recently formed groups, and since an exhibition of their work at the URC in December 2018 we have included some of their work in each Newsletter.

The one shown here is by Linda Corry and was featured in the January 2019 Newsletter, along with seven other paintings and drawings.



## Singing for Pleasure



Brilliantly led by Barbara Wingard, the Choir has been entertaining our U3A at various events right from the start such as our Christmas meeting as shown here from the January 2018 Newsletter. They have also performed for several other local groups, such as the St James' Friendship Group.

## Spanish

Our most recently formed group is thriving with members continuing to improve and grow in confidence.

The photo is from the January 2020 Newsletter.



## Ukulele



The Ukulele Group is a fairly recently formed group who have made great strides, and we have enjoyed listening to them play for us at several U3A events. The image is from the July 2016 Newsletter.



### Walking (Long Walks)



We started the Long Walks Group right at the beginning, and it has gone from strength to strength over the years with the average number on walks increasing gradually from 7 in the early days to 12 in 2019. The image on the left was taken on our shorter December walk in the Bollin Valley, and was featured on the cover of the June 2013 Newsletter. The second image, also featured in the June 2013 Newsletter, is on a walk from Disley led by the late Jim Crook, part of which was walking into the teeth of a blizzard,

### Walking (Short Walks)



The Short Walks Group is another original group which is also still going strong. The image is from the December 2014 Newsletter, and shows the walkers at Entwistle.

### Walking (Strollers)

The Strollers Group started soon after the other walking groups, and their local walks (always finishing at a tea shop) are very popular.

This image was taken at Bramhall Hall and is from the December 2014 Newsletter.





## Wine Appreciation



Members of the Wine Appreciation Group have been enjoying wines and learning more about them from the very start of the U3A. The first image is from the June 2013 Newsletter and the second from June 2015.

## Photographic Competition

Keith Marsden was the winner of our first Photographic competition in 2016 with this image of a Southern Hawker dragonfly (*Aeshna Cyanae*), featured in the January 2017 Newsletter. John Houghton won the 2017 competition with his Green Shield Bug (*Palomina prasina*), displayed in the January 2018 Newsletter.



## Future Newsletters

Our normal pattern of half-yearly Newsletters, which give a comprehensive account of the activities of all our groups for the previous 6 months, together with features about other events such as the Coach holiday, the Christmas meeting and New Members meeting, and more general information about our U3A, has obviously been disrupted by the current restrictions. The next Newsletter would normally be published in January, but we will not be able to make this a 'normal' 6-monthly newsletter, so we may circulate shorter versions such as this one at irregular intervals. We would welcome any articles, items of news or images of interest to our members to include. It doesn't have to be Group Convenors who submit them, contributions from anyone will be welcome.